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ABSTRACT

Alcoholism is becoming an increasingly significant problem for women. At one time, women rarely drank and the female alcoholic was an anomaly. Estimates of the total number of women alcoholics in the United States today are over 900,000. Women now constitute from 20 to 35% of all alcoholics in this country. This paper attempts to gain understanding of psychological factors which may underlie female alcoholism. The approach used was to apply a theoretical model derived from social psychology: attribution theory. In order to assess causal attributions, expectancies, and affect, a group of alcoholics were asked to state their causal attributions for a number of success or failure achievement and interpersonal situations. Their responses were compared with those of the general population. The alcoholic sample included 41 male and 28 female recovering alcoholics in a halfway house treatment center. The nonalcoholic sample included 31 males and 33 females recruited from neighborhoods similar to the former neighborhoods of the alcoholic subjects. Alcoholics of both sexes saw success most resulting from effort. Female alcoholics saw failure as more due to their personalities than to lack of effort. Employment seemed to be a particularly important situation for understanding alcoholic attributions. (Author/JL)

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DEBILITATING ATTRIBUTIONS OF THE WOMAN ALCOHOLIC UNDERGOING TREATMENT

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Alcoholism is becoming an increasingly significant problem for women. At one time, women rarely drank and the female alcoholic was an anomoly. Estimates of the total number of women alcoholics in the United States today are over 900,000. Women now constitute from 20 to 35% of all alcoholics in this country (Beckman, 1976; Browne-Mayers, Seelye, & Stillman, 1976; Johnson & Garzon, Note 1; Fact Sheet: Women and Alcohol, 1975; Norris, 1976).

Although many see this increase in the number and percentage of women alcoholics as resulting from women's efforts at liberation, it must also be pointed out that this increase is part of a general societal increase in alcoholism. As women receive more education and work more outside the home, more women drink as well (Johnson & Garzon, Note 1). However, it is not necessarily the more educated and higher wage earning women who become alcoholics. Female problem drinkers and alcoholics are more often unemployed and have slightly lower levels of education than the general female population (Armor, Polich, & Stambul, 1976). Thus, it may be the women who are not able to successfully cope with the increased opportunities for women who become alcoholics. It might also be pointed out that the feminist movement, rather than leading to increased alcoholism in women, has been instrumental in attracting public attention to an existing problem. Women alcoholics may be more visible today, both in terms of their drinking patterns (drinking more outside the home) and in the recent demands by women for more recognition of the alcoholic problem in the form of treatment and research.

This paper is an attempt to gain understanding of psychological factors which may underlie female alcoholism. The approach used was to apply a theoretical model

derived from social psychology: attribution theory. Attribution theory is concerned with how people interpret information about their own behavior and the behavior of others in making judgments about why they feel things happen. It is assumed that people implicitly or explicitly make such causal attributions about many events in their lives. These causal judgments then become important determinants of their emotional reactions to these events, their predictions for the future, and their own subsequent actions (e.g., Heider, 1958; Shaver, 1975). Since such cognitions, if better understood, might be especially susceptible to change, attribution therapy may be an important area for counseling research and practice.

Causal Attributions for Success and Failure

Research into various aspects of the attribution process has been increasingly active over the last ten years. Based on a variety of studies dealing with how people utilize information in making causal judgments of all types and the consequences of various attributions, psychologists now understand a good deal about causal attributions. Much of the theoretical research assessing attributions for good and bad events is based on the work of Weiner and his associates (e.g., Weiner, 1974; Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971). This group has done extensive work in investigating the role of causal attributions for success and failure in explaining achievement-oriented behavior. Although much of this work has been laboratory oriented, the applications of this work have been useful for furthering our understanding of diverse areas of behavior. The concepts developed to explain achievement oriented behavior have now been applied to a variety of other settings. These include sports attributions, employee performance evaluations, wife beating

and toleration by women of being beaten, and parole decisions among others. We have also looked at non-laboratory achievement events such as students taking an exam (see Frieze, Note 2).

On the basis of empirical findings as well as upon some speculation, the achievement attribution process has generally been conceptualized as shown in the schematic model labeled Figure 1 (Frieze, 1975). First, information about the event is used to determine whether it could best be considered a success or failure (Box 1, Figure 1). Once this is determined, the person then processes other information (Box 2) such as how they had done in the past or how well other people do to determine why they experienced this particular outcome (e.g., Frieze & Weiner, 1971; McArthur, 1972). This causal attribution (Box 3) has consequences for beliefs or expectancies about the future (Box 4) and the affective reaction to the situation (Box 5). These then determine what new behavior occurs (Box 6).

Insert Figure 1 about here

There are always a variety of causal attributions which can be made for any situation. Considering the example of a person taking an exam, a person might determine that the success on the exam was due to one or more of several possible causes: the person's ability in that subject, trying hard, the exam's being easy, or good luck. Similarly, if he or she had failed, it might be attributed to lack of ability, lack of effort, the difficulty of the exam, or bad luck. These four causes were specified by Heider (1958) and have been most fully researched by Weiner and associates (e.g., Weiner et al., 1971; Weiner, 1974). More recent work (Elig &

Frieze, 1975; Frieze, 1976) has indicated that other causal factors in addition to ability, effort, luck and task difficulty are frequently employed by people in explaining achievement success and failure. Other situations evoke yet other causes (e.g., Frieze, Note 3; McHugh, Note 4; Snyder & Frieze, Note 5). Thus there are a variety of causal attributions which people use to explain any event. Their use varies across situations and across people. However, regardless of the specific causal attributions used, it is theoretically possible to classify any set of causal categories into three basic dimensions as shown in Table 1 for the exam situation. Each of these dimensions then has differential consequences for affect and expectancy.

Insert Table 1 about here

The first dimension, internality, has to do with whether the cause of an event is associated with the primary actor in the situation, and is thus internal to this person, or whether the cause is external to this person. Thus, a person may succeed on an exam because of the internal causes of ability, effort, mood, personality or knowledge. He or she may also succeed because of external factors: the ease of the task, someone else's help, or good luck. Related to this dimension and sometimes confused with it is the third dimension of intentionality. If the actor has control over the internal cause it is intentional (see Elig & Frieze, 1975). Thus, effort is internal and intentional while ability and personality are unintentional, although still internal. External causes can be intentional if they involve another person who controls them. If someone else aids the actor, this would be an external, intentional cause. These two dimensions are confounded in the widely cited concept of locus of control. An

internal locus of control, would, in our terminology, involve an internal and intentional cause while external locus of control typically involves external, unintentional factors (see Elig & Frieze, 1975; Rotter, 1966).

Another dimension which is extremely important for classifying causal attributions is stability. Ability, personality and unchanging environmental factors are stable and change relatively little over time. Effort, mood and luck are unstable over time. Thus, temporal stability involves a relatively unchanging cause during the time period. Another aspect of stability is situational stability. Does this causal factor vary across the situations one wishes to generalize to? Thus, the task or situation is stable over time but unstable when considering situational stability (Valle & Frieze, 1976; Weiner, Russell & Lerman, in press). Stable elements in the person are most often stable over time and situation. However, depending on the specific situation and the beliefs of the person making the causal attribution, causes can be classified into any of several cells with this dimensional analysis (Elig & Frieze, 1975; Weiner et al., in press).

As seen in Figure 1, once the attribution of the event is made, certain consequences follow (Boxes 4 and 5). If a student attributes a poor exam performance to lack of effort, she may expect to succeed in the future if she tries harder. If, on the other hand, the failure is attributed to lack of ability, the student will expect to do just as poorly in the future on the same task or any other requiring the same abilities. A number of researchers have shown that temporal stability is related to expectancies for the future for the same task (e.g., McMahan, 1973; Valle & Frieze, 1976; Weiner, Nierenberg, & Goldstein, 1976). Stable causes produce expectancies

that outcomes will continue to be the same, while unstable causes at times produce changes in expectancies such as the belief that success may occur next time in spite of past failures. Although the expectancy effects for situational stability have not been tested, they should function in the same way if one is predicting future outcomes for a similar task.

There is no question that people feel happier after a good than after a bad outcome (e.g., Nicholls, 1975; Ruble, Parsons, & Ross, 1976). However, affective reactions are moderated to some degree by the causal attribution. Studies have shown that outcomes attributed to internal factors are experienced with more pride or shame than outcomes seen as caused by external factors (Weiner, 1974). Thus, one feels more pride if she feels she did well because of her ability or effort than if she attributes a success to luck or another external factor.

These theoretical predictions are based largely upon laboratory studies where college students were made to succeed or fail at an achievement task and/or where only a small portion of the model was tested at one time. When attributional studies are done in less rigid settings, these relationships may not always hold (e.g., Frieze, Note 2; Frieze, Snyder, & Fontaine, Note 6).

Attributions of Alcoholics

Many researchers have been concerned with finding personality correlates of alcoholism. A variety of correlates have been found but many of these either directly or indirectly indicate that alcoholics have lower self-esteem than the general population (e.g., Beckman, 1975; Benensohn & Resnick, 1974; Greenwald, Carter, & Stein, 1973; Wood & Duffey, 1966). This relationship is seen in a variety of forms, many of

which relate to causal beliefs, affect, and expectancies. For example, Jessor, Carmen and Grossman (1968) found that heavy drinkers in college tended to have low expectations for future success in satisfying various needs. Barry (1976) hypothesizes that alcoholics have particularly high anxieties over failure while simultaneously wanting to avoid too much success. He felt that alcoholics drink to sedate these strong emotional reactions.

Jones and Berglas (Note 7) propose a similar model. They hypothesize that alcohol obscures the usual implications of either success or failure. An alcoholic may believe that failure after drinking can easily be attributed to the external factor of alcohol and thus does not have the same negative implications as a failure attributed to failings in the person himself. Thus, alcohol provides an excuse. Similarly, success is not expected after drinking and so the person may be particularly rewarded if he or she succeeds in spite of alcohol. The phenomenon of feeling happier about unexpected success has been reported by other researchers as well (e.g., Bailey, Helm, & Gladstone, 1975; House & Perney, 1974). Jones and Berglas (Note 7) further suggest that alcoholics, like underachievers, are likely to have high expectancies for the future in spite of past failures, saying to themselves, "when I stop drinking, I'll be able to do all sorts of things."

Therefore, we might predict that alcoholics, showing the low self-esteem pattern, would be more internal for failure than a nonalcoholic population (Fitch, 1970). Logically, they should also be more intentional and more stable for failure. However, the Jones and Berglas theory might suggest a different pattern of being less internal, stable and intentional for failure. These contradictory hypotheses will be tested

although we predict the low self-esteem model. For similar reasons, we would also expect nonalcoholics to be more internal, stable and intentional for success.

Although the evidence is again contradictory, we would also expect alcoholics to have low expectancies and more negative affect overall than nonalcoholics.

Attributions of Women Alcoholics

Although some researchers suggest that there are relatively few differences between male and female alcoholics (e.g., Beckman, 1975; Sclare, 1970), others report many sex differences. One basic issue separating men and women is that drinking is far more accepted for men than women (Beckman, 1975; Curlee, 1967; Sclare, 1970). Thus, a male who gets drunk and loud is often seen as displaying normal masculine behavior while a woman who does this may well encounter strong social disapproval. Perhaps because of this, women tend to start drinking later. They also seem to be more influenced by factors in their environment as causal factors for heavy drinking (Bromet & Moos, 1976). Thus, they are more likely to have an alcoholic spouse and particular life stresses percipitate heavy drinking (Beckman, 1975; Bromet & Moos, 1976; Sclare, 1970).

Female alcoholics may also suffer special feelings of inadequacy (Blane, 1968). For example, Bromet and Moos (1976) reported that married male alcoholics were more self confident and less depressed than female alcoholics. Also, Johnson and Garzon (Note 1) found that female alcoholics were more depressed. This may reflect a general pattern of low self-esteem in women and low self expectancies and lack of pride (see Frieze, Fisher, Hanusa, McHugh, & Valle, in press). Female alcoholics may well be even more debilitating in their attributional patterns than college women

who tend to be more external, unstable and unintentional for success than college men (e.g., Frieze et al., in press). They may also have even more negative reactions to failure than the male alcoholics, again speculating that sex differences found in college students will be found more strongly in an alcoholic population. Finally following from these attributions, it could be further predicted that female alcoholics would have less pride for success and more shame for failure and lower expectancies for the future.

In order to assess causal attributions, expectancies and affect, a group of alcoholics were asked to state their causal attributions for a number of success or failure situations which they were likely to have some acquaintance with. Their responses were compared with those of the general population. Situations dealt with high school grades, employment, refinishing furniture (all achievement situations) and with making friends in a group, having a same-sex friend in the neighborhood and making friends at a party (interpersonal situations). Since several researchers have mentioned that interpersonal difficulties may represent special problems for alcoholics (e.g., Donovan & O'Leary, 1975), and that women alcoholics may attach special emphasis to doing well in accepted female roles (e.g., Wilsnak, 1973), it was further predicted that women alcoholics (as well as men) would show debilitating attribution patterns especially in social situations.

Summary of Hypotheses

1. Female alcoholics will be more internal, stable and intentional for failure and less internal, stable and intentional for success than the general population. Male alcoholics will show the same trends to a lesser degree.

2. Female alcoholics will have lower expectancies and affect than nonalcoholic

subjects. Male alcoholics will also show these effects to a lesser degree.

3. Female alcoholics as well as males will show debilitating attributions, expectancies and affect especially for social situations.

METHOD

Design

The present study involved three between-subject variables: subject group, sex, and outcome; and a within-subject variable: situation. The resultant design is a 2 X 2 X 2 X 6 with two levels of subject group (alcoholic and nonalcoholic), two levels of sex, two levels of outcome (success and failure), and six levels of the within-subject variable, stimulus situation.

Subjects

One hundred and thirty three subjects, 69 alcoholics and 64 nonalcoholics participated in the study. The alcoholic subjects were residents at a coed halfway house treatment center for alcoholics located in a small urban community in southwestern Pennsylvania. The nonalcoholic subjects were volunteers recruited by door-to-door soliciting of interviews in designated neighborhoods in southwestern Pennsylvania. The neighborhoods were selected on the basis of similarity to the former neighborhoods of the alcoholic subjects in order to make the nonalcoholic sample an appropriate comparison group.

The alcoholic sample included 41 male and 28 female recovering alcoholics. Eighty seven percent of the sample was white, 10% was black and 3% was Hispanic. Most of the residents identified themselves as Catholic or Protestant, with 17%

expressing no religious preference. The ages of the residents ranged from 18 to 56 with a mean of 29.9. One half of the residents had never been married, 13% were currently married, and 36% were separated, divorced, or widowed. The average income was less than $7500 per year with 38% reporting incomes under $3000 per year. The educational and employment levels were also relatively low; most residents had unskilled or low level jobs, and a high school or trade school education or less. Only 3% had college degrees and 19% had attended college.

The nonalcoholic sample consisted of 31 male and 33 female participants. Ninety four percent of the sample was white, and the majority expressed a Catholic or Protestant religious preference. Their ages ranged from 14 to 70 years with a mean of 33.27. The most prevalent marital status was married (48%); 36.5% had never married, and 16% were separated, divorced, or widowed. The income levels of this group were higher than those of the alcoholic subjects, with the average income being less than $12,000 per year, and only 11% reporting incomes of less than $3000 per year. The educational levels of the nonalcoholics also differed from those of the alcoholics. Fifteen percent had college or advanced degrees, and 22% had attended college. However, the employment levels of the two groups were not very discrepant, with a large number of both groups having low level or unskilled-type jobs, and approximately 20% of both samples having supervisory, technical, or professional positions.

Stimuli

The questionnaire contained brief descriptions of six stimulus situations in which the subjects (Ss) were requested to imagine themselves experiencing this success or failure. The stimuli were selected to include both achievement and interpersonal

situations that involved a success or failure outcome. The three achievement situations were: (1) receiving very good or very poor grades on a high school project; (2) receiving very good or very poor ratings as an employee; and (3) receiving compliments or criticisms on a refinished piece of furniture. The three interpersonal situations were: (1) being popular or unpopular at a party; (2) having a lot of friends or no friends within a group; and (3) establishing or not establishing a long term friendship with a member of the same sex.

While the situations were a within-subject variable, outcome was a between-subject variable. Thus, there were two forms of the questionnaire, one containing six successful outcomes, and one containing six failure outcomes. Each subject responded to one form of the questionnaire.

Procedure

The present study was conducted as part of an on-going research project at the alcoholic treatment center. The questionnaire was included in an intake interview, and every incoming resident participated. The questionnaire was administered verbally by a member of the research team within the Center's facilities. The research team consisted of male and female graduate and undergraduate students.

To obtain the nonalcoholic respondents, the research team members went to the former neighborhoods of the recovering alcoholics and attempted to obtain interviews by door-to-door soliciting on nearby streets. They introduced themselves as students conducting research on "the personality correlates of drinking behaviors." (There was no mention of alcoholism or of the treatment center.) Interviews were conducted within the respondent's residence.

Dependent Measures

After each of the stimulus situations were read by the interviewer, subjects were asked to respond to an open-ended question about why the outcome had occurred (i.e., why do you think the ratings were so low?). After giving free response causal attributions for the outcome, subjects were asked to indicate on seven-point scales: (a) how they felt about the outcome (from very bad to very good); (b) what their future expectancies were (i.e., what kinds of ratings would you expect to receive in six months, from very low to very high?); and (c) how common they believed the situation to be for people in general (from very uncommon to very common).

Coding

The free response attributional data was coded using the Coding Schema of Perceived Causality (CPSP) developed by Elig and Frieze (1975). This coding scheme involves coding attributional responses for the location of the cause (internal, mutual or uncertain, external), the intentionality of the cause (unintentional, uncertain, mediate, and intentional), and the stability of the attribution (unstable, uncertain, and stable). In the present study, stability was coded two ways. Temporal stability refers to the stability of the given cause in the identical situation over time, situational stability refers to the degree to which the cause would be a factor in other related situations. Thus, each attributional response was assigned a four-digit code, with each digit referring to its location on one of the four dimensions, and the entire code being used as a category.

RESULTS

Several types of analyses were done. First, for all the major hypotheses and for a test of the familiarity of the situations used, a series of 6 X 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 analyses of variance were done. The within-subject factor was situation (high school, employment, furniture, group, friend and party). Between-subject variables were sample (alcoholic, nonalcoholic), sex (male, female), and outcome (success, failure). Open-ended attributions were coded by dimension for these analyses.

Familiarity with Situations

The major 6 X 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA was used to test subjects' ratings of how familiar or common they felt the various situations were. Overall, all subjects rated the situations as being slightly above average in familiarity ($\bar{X} = 4.39$ on a 7-point scale).

No differences were found between the situations in how common they were believed to be. There were also no differences between alcoholics and the general population in how familiar the situations were other than a main effect for alcoholics to rate all situations higher ($F_{1,528} = 19.28$; $p < .001$). This suggests that alcoholics are either more aware of successes and failures in their lives or that they wish to appear to be more normal and so rate the situations higher.

Insert Table 2 about here

Internal-External Dimension

Mean externality ratings for all situations are shown in Table 2. The achieve-

ment situations were more internal and the social situations were more external over success and failure (main effect for situation: $F_{5,528} = 57.10$; $p < .001$). Also, consistent with other studies (e.g., Frieze & Weiner, 1971), failure was more external than success ($F_{1,528} = 5.87$; $p < .01$). Also, all groups took less responsibility for success than failure for the group and party situation while they saw their successes in employment, redoing furniture and making a friend more internal than their failures (Situation X Outcome Interaction: $F_{5,528} = 5.07$; $p < .01$). Another way of viewing this interaction was that there was an overall trend to see achievement situations more internal for success and for the two types of situations to be more similar for failure.

Insert Table 3 about here

Intentionality Dimension

As with internality, the achievement situations were more intentional as can be seen in Table 3 (Situation main effect: $F_{5,528} = 8.72$; $p < .01$). Alcoholics tended to be somewhat more intentional for success across all situations while the general adult group was more intentional for failure (Population X Outcome Interaction: $F_{1,528} = 3.59$; $p < .10$). However, given the lack of a population difference for internality, this trend is difficult to interpret since it only says that alcoholics see themselves or others as responsible for their successes in some intentional way.

Insert Table 4 about here

Temporal Stability

Once again, a main effect for situation showed that the achievement situations were seen as less stable than the social situations ($F_{5,528} = 29.87$; $p < .001$). Also, success was more stable than failure ($F_{1,528} = 4.56$; $p < .05$), and alcoholics made fewer stable attributions than nonalcoholics ($F_{1,528} = 13.39$, $p < .01$). There was also a situation by outcome interaction indicating that failing to do a good job of refinishing furniture was considered more stable than succeeding and the high school situation was equally stable for success and failure ($F_{5,528} = 7.99$; $p < .01$).

There were also two trends relating to temporal stability which differentiated groups. A population by sex by outcome interaction ($F_{1,528} = 2.99$; $p < .10$) indicated that of all four groups, female alcoholics were the least stable for success and they were more stable for failure than success. Thus, female alcoholics appear to see their failures as relatively permanent and their successes as somewhat transient.

A second result was a population by situation interaction ($F_{5,528} = 2.45$; $p < .05$). This interaction indicated that alcoholics differed from nonalcoholics in their stability ratings most for the employment situation and least for the friendship situation. Alcoholics saw their successes and failures in job settings as relatively unstable while both groups saw friendship patterns as stable.

Insert Table 5 about here

Situational Stability

Results for situational stability closely paralleled those for temporal stability. Successes and failures in achievement situations were generally seen as less

generalizable to other situations although the friendship situation was least generalizable (Situation main effect: $F_{5,528} = 10.14$; $p < .01$). Where alcoholics had been significantly less stable over time in their attributions, their lower situational stability was not significant but was in the same direction ($F_{1,528} = 2.17$; $p < .20$). However, there was no main effect for outcome for situational stability and no interaction with population.

Female alcoholics were again the least stable of all groups for success while normal males were most stable. For failure, male alcoholics were least stable for failure while female alcoholics were most stable (Population by Sex X Outcome interaction: $F_{1,528} = 4.13$; $p < .05$). Also, males in general were more stable for success while females were more stable for failure (Sex by Outcome interaction: $F_{1,528} = 5.65$; $p < .01$).

Causal Attributions

These dimensional analyses, although necessary for statistical rigor, do not always give a clear picture of what attributions people were really making. An analysis of the specific attributions used showed some differences in overall category use as shown in Tables 6, 7 and 8. Looking first at overall differences in Table 6, females used fewer ability attributions for success. This was especially true for the female alcoholic. Alcoholics of both sexes saw success most resulting from effort.

Insert Table 6 about here

For failure, the female alcoholics were again the most deviant group. While others attributed failure primarily to lack of effort, female alcoholics saw failure as more due to their personalities or their being too quiet or acting inappropriately in

some other way. A common attribution for all groups was their not caring to do well.

Insert Tables 7 & 8 about here

Table 7 shows the major causal attributions made for achievement situations by the various groups. Effort was the primary attribution for all groups. The major differences occurred for failure. Female alcoholics were the only group with cited absenteeism (from a job) as a major cause of failure. Females in general cited their personality or ability (a stable factor) as a cause of failure while males did not. Only the alcoholic males cited alcohol or drugs as a reason for failure. Nonalcoholics were more likely than alcoholics to blame other people for failures.

Explanations for social success and failure did not vary as much across groups as seen in Table 8. Common interests, personality and compatibility were cited by all groups as the cause of interpersonal successes. Female alcoholics were unique in citing their inability to relate to others as a cause or failure.

Affect and Expectancy

Affect ratings ("How do you feel?") were done on a one to seven scale with seven being "very good." As typical in attribution research, the largest effect for affect was that people felt better after success than failure ($F_{1,528} = 850.82$; $p < .001$; success = 6.03 and failure = 2.81). Women had higher ratings for success and felt worse than men after failure ($F_{1,528} = 13.82$; $p < .01$). However, overall, men felt better than women ($F_{1,528} = 5.43$; $p < .05$).

A Situation by Outcome interaction ($F_{5,528} = 4.99$; $p < .01$) further indicated that affect ratings for the employment situation were most affected by success and

failure (6.19 and 1.92 respectively). Also, people felt best when succeeding at an employment situation or a high school exam and worst about doing poorly at a job.

There were no significant effects due to alcoholism for affect.

Expectancy ratings were also done on a one to seven scale, with seven indicating a high expectancy. Once again, outcome was the largest effect with people expecting to do better after successes than failures ($F_{1,528} = 38.30$; $p < .001$). Also, expectancies were highest for high school (5.17) and employment (5.32) situations and lowest for friendship (3.91) ($F_{5,528} = 17.85$; $p < .001$). An outcome by situation interaction ($F_{5,528} = 6.20$; $p < .01$) indicated that expectancies after success were especially high for the employment situation and although they were much lower after failure (6.21 versus 4.44), they were still relatively high.

There was a trend ($F_{1,528} = 3.18$; $p < .10$) for females to have higher overall expectancies than males (4.56 versus 4.31). A higher order alcohol by sex by outcome interaction complicates these findings ($F_{5,528} = 3.00$; $p < .05$). Female alcoholics had the highest expectancies after success (5.21) while male alcoholics were lowest (4.58). Female alcoholics were also most affected by outcome and dropped to 3.94 after failure although the male alcoholic's expectancy after failure was a still lower 3.82.

DISCUSSION

Attributions of Female Alcoholics

It was hypothesized that female alcoholics would make more internal, stable and intentional attributions for failures and less internal, stable and intentional attributions for success than the general population. The results of the present study do

not provide clear support for these hypotheses. There were no differences between the alcoholics and nonalcoholics on the internality dimension; both groups used more internal and mutual attributions than external ones. Further, alcoholics were generally more intentional for success than nonalcoholics and less intentional for failure. Thus, the intentionality results are in the opposite direction of the predictions. However, the female alcoholics were the least stable (temporally and situationally) for success and they were the most stable for failure. The dimensional analysis and the category data, as shown in Table 6, suggests that female alcoholics in general made internal, intentional and unstable attributions for success (i.e., effort) and internal, unintentional and stable (i.e., personality) attributions for failure. Thus, although the predictions concerning female alcoholics were only partially supported by the data, there is evidence that they may have some debilitating attributional patterns. Specifically, the data suggests that female alcoholics may benefit from help in learning to value their own abilities in success situations, and in learning to attribute failures to unstable factors such as lack of effort.

It was also predicted that female alcoholics would have lower expectancies and affect than nonalcoholic subjects. However, these predictions were not supported in the present study. Affective reactions to the outcomes did not differ by group, and female expectancies for the future were high rather than low. Given the debilitating attributions female alcoholics made, the meaning of this affect and expectancy data is unclear. Perhaps the female alcoholics were being defensive, and these ratings had a more obvious social desirability factor than the free response attributions, or these confusing results may reflect an inability of the role playing technique to evoke the affect and expectancies that these subjects would actually experience in the situation.

Another explanation for the failure to find predicted results may be that alcoholics are not a homogeneous group. Other research has indicated that male and female alcoholics show different psychological dynamics (e.g., Beckman, 1975) and that there are many subgroups of female alcoholics as there are for males (e.g., Barry, 1976; Donovan & O'Leary, 1975; Goss & Morosko, 1970; O'Leary et al., 1976). There are many variables that could be of significance in differentiating subgroups of female alcoholics including certain role dimensions like marital status (Bromet & Moss, 1976), or any of the numerous personality variables that differentiate women in general (see Frieze, Fisher, Hanusa, McHugh, & Valle, in press). Possibly, future research may use attributional patterns themselves as a method of distinguishing important subgroups of a more general population like women.

Situational Differences

There were clear differences between situations in causal attributions made. Employment seemed to be a particularly important situation for understanding alcoholic attributions. We had expected that social situations might differentiate the female alcoholic from other groups, but it now appears that more attention needs to be given to female alcoholics' views of achievement situations. Research investigating the attributions made by female alcoholics for success and failure in situations more explicitly viewed as female roles (i.e., wife and mother) may also be beneficial given recent evidence that the female alcoholic experiences feelings of inadequacy in these roles (Wilsnack, 1973).

Recovering Alcoholics

Finally it must be noted that the alcoholic group used for this study had already undergone some treatment for alcoholism, and they were now living in a half-

way house treatment setting. Such people may be very different in their views of themselves than alcoholics who have not yet received treatment or who have dropped out of treatment before the half-way house stage. Future research may attempt to investigate possible changes in attributional patterns as the alcoholic progresses through various stages of the recovery process, or the possible relationship between certain attributional tendencies and recovery prognoses.

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TABLE 1

A THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL FOR CLASSIFYING CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE

(Modified from Elig and Frieze, 1975)

	Internal	
	Stable[1]	Unstable
Intentional	Stable effort (Diligence or laziness)	Unstable effort (Trying or not trying hard)
Unintentional	Ability Knowledge or background Personality	Fatigue Mood

	External	
	Stable[2]	Unstable
Intentional	Others always help or interfere	Others help or interfere with this event
Unintentional	Task difficulty or ease Personality of others	Task difficulty or ease (task changes) Luck or unique circumstances Other accidentally help or interfere

[1]Temporal and Situational

[2]Temporal

TABLE 2

Mean Externality of Causal Attributions[1]

	Alcoholic				Nonalcoholic			
	Success		Failure		Success		Failure	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Situation								
ACHIEVEMENT								
High School	1.00	1.08	1.08	1.25	1.00	1.08	1.17	1.25
Employment	1.00	1.00	1.67	1.50	1.08	1.33	1.33	1.67
Furniture	1.33	1.33	1.67	1.67	1.17	1.33	1.67	2.17
SOCIAL								
Group	1.83	1.58	1.58	1.33	1.75	1.83	1.50	1.33
Friend	1.58	1.50	1.42	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.33	1.58
Party	2.00	2.08	2.00	2.33	2.00	1.83	2.08	2.58

[1]The Internal/External dimension of causality was coded on a 1 (Internal); 2 (Mutual); 3 (External) scale.

TABLE 3

Mean Intentionality of Causal Attributions[1]

	Alcoholic				Nonalcoholic			
	Success		Failure		Success		Failure	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Situation								
ACHIEVEMENT								
High School	3.42	2.67	3.0	2.67	3.17	3.17	3.33	3.58
Employment	3.00	3.08	2.67	3.00	3.08	2.67	3.17	3.17
Furniture	3.17	3.33	2.25	2.67	3.17	3.00	3.08	2.92
SOCIAL								
Group	3.08	2.25	2.92	2.83	3.42	3.00	2.42	2.08
Friend	2.42	2.42	2.25	2.42	2.42	2.33	2.50	2.00
Party	2.25	2.25	2.33	2.92	1.58	2.50	2.17	2.25

[1]The intentionality Dimension of Causality is coded: 1 = unintentional; 2 = uncertain; 3 = mediate; 4 = intentional.

TABLE 4

Mean Stability Over Time of Causal Attributions[1]

	Alcoholic				Nonalcoholic			
	Success		Failure		Success		Failure	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Situation								
ACHIEVEMENT								
High School	1.17	1.50	1.67	1.58	1.67	1.58	1.42	1.67
Employment	1.33	2.17	1.83	1.58	2.17	2.92	2.08	2.67
Furniture	1.33	1.50	2.25	1.67	1.33	1.50	2.17	2.33
SOCIAL								
Group	2.67	3.00	2.17	2.00	3.00	2.92	2.33	2.33
Friend	2.75	2.92	2.42	2.58	2.83	2.67	2.42	2.50
Party	2.50	2.17	2.17	1.92	2.83	2.67	2.17	2.17

[1]Temporal Stability is coded: 1 = unstable; 2 = uncertain; 3 = stable.

TABLE 5

Mean Stability Across Situations of Causal Attributions[1]

	Alcoholic				Nonalcoholic			
	Success		Failure		Success		Failure	
Situation	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
ACHIEVEMENT								
High School	1.00	1.67	1.00	1.17	1.50	1.42	1.08	1.50
Employment	1.17	1.67	1.83	1.25	1.33	2.17	1.08	1.08
Furniture	1.17	1.50	1.75	1.00	1.67	1.33	1.50	1.33
SOCIAL								
Group	1.00	1.83	1.83	1.33	1.67	1.92	1.67	1.67
Friend	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.17	1.33	1.33	1.08	1.00
Party	1.67	2.00	1.67	1.75	2.00	1.83	1.67	1.67

[1]Situational Stability is coded: 1 = unstable; 2 = uncertain; 3 = stable.

TABLE 6

Most Frequent Causal Explanations Over All Situations[1]

	SUCCESS	FAILURE
Alcoholics		
Female	Effort (25)	Personality (10)
	Things in common with others (14)	Too quiet (10)
	Did a good job (12)	Didn't care (6)
		Others didn't care (6)
Male	Effort (25)	Lack of effort (41)
	Ability (16)	Personality (9)
	Things in common with others (15)	Didn't care (9)
Nonalcoholic		
Female	Things in common with others (23)	Lack of effort (29)
	Effort (22)	Lack common interests (11)
	Ability (18)	Didn't care (9)
Male	Things in common with others (23)	Lack of effort (18)
	Effort (16)	Others didn't care (9)
	Ability (15)	Personality (7)

[1]Frequencies listed in parentheses.

TABLE 7

Most Frequent Causal Explanations for Achievement Situations[1]

	SUCCESS	FAILURE
Alcoholics		
FEMALE	Effort (20)	Lack of effort (15)
	Did a good job (6)	Absenteeism (8)
	Conscientiousness (good worker) (6)	Personality and/or ability (5)
MALE	Effort (22)	Lack of effort (25)
	Conscientiousness (good worker) (11)	Didn't do a good job (6)
	Did a good job (7)	Alcohol, drugs (5)
Nonalcoholics		
FEMALE	Effort (26)	Lack of effort (21)
	Conscientiousness (good worker) (5)	Personality and/or ability (4)
		Supervisor/teacher doesn't like me (3)
		Poor worker (3)
MALE	Effort (14)	Lack of effort (10)
	Conscientiousness (good worker) (8)	Other's poor judgment (9)
	Did a good job (6)	Lack of interest (4)

[1]Frequencies listed in parentheses.

TABLE 8

Most Frequent Causal Explanations for Social Situations[1]

	SUCCESS	FAILURE
Alcoholics		
FEMALE	Common interests (14)	Acting inappropriately (8)
	Got to know them (6)	Personality (ability to relate) (5)
	We are compatible (5)	
MALE	Common interests (15)	Acting inappropriately (16)
	Personality (ability to relate) (10)	I don't care (7)
	We are compatible (6)	They didn't like me (6)
Nonalcoholics		
FEMALE	Common interests (22)	They didn't like me (8)
	Personality (ability to relate) (13)	I don't care (6)
	We are compatible (7)	
MALE	Common interests (22)	Acting inappropriately (8)
	Personality (ability to relate) (9)	They didn't like me (8)

[1] Frequencies listed in parentheses.

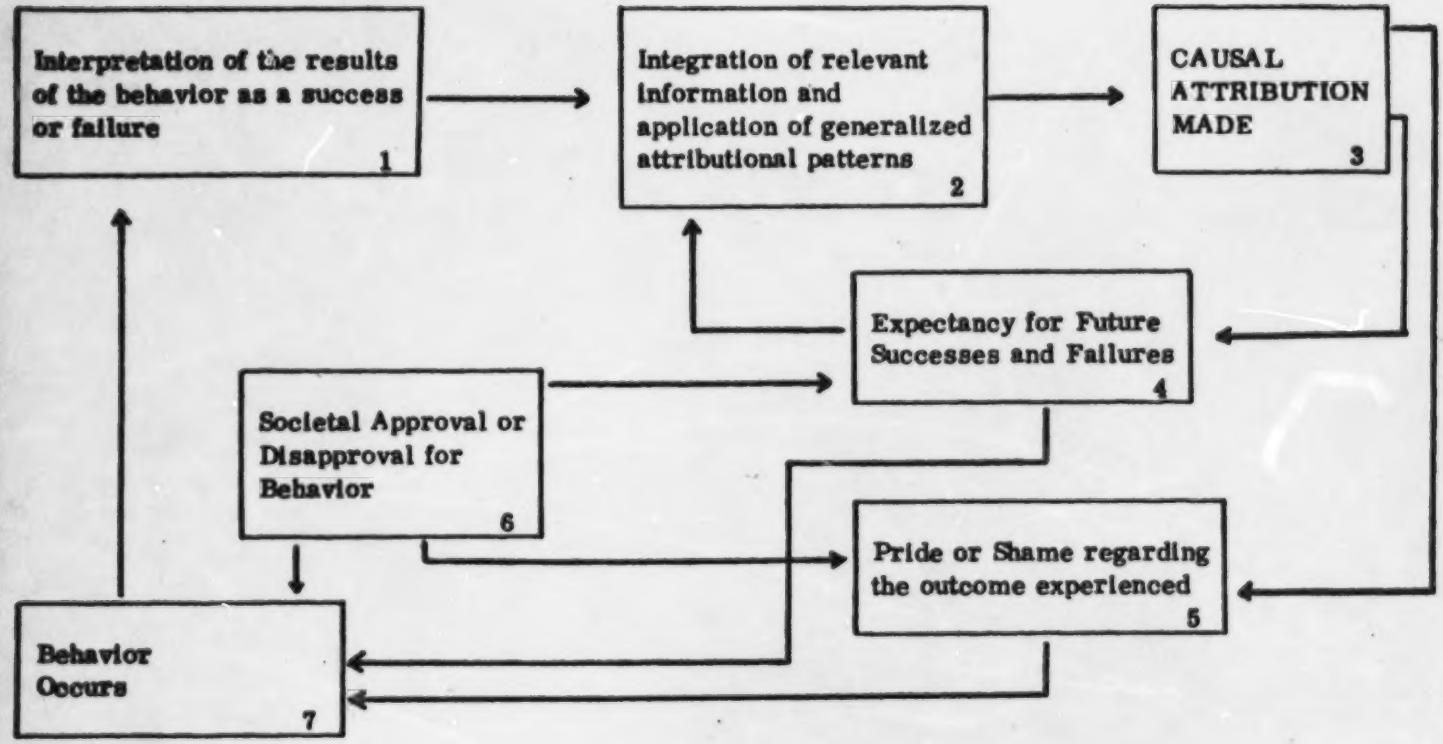

FIGURE 1. The attributional process for success and failure events. (Modified from Frieze, 1975.)